

## REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON RETAIL DISTRIBUTION AND MARKETING OF FOOD\*

**T**HE Committee on the Retail Distribution and Marketing of Food submits the following report:

In seeking information regarding conditions as to the distribution and marketing of food from the larger centers of population, including the majority of the states, it was somewhat of a revelation to receive many replies indicating that the subject received little attention other than the taking of samples for chemical analysis. Because of the fact that more than two-thirds of the diseases of man are attributable, directly or indirectly, to improper food rations or are alleviated by dietary treatment, and also because of the large percentage of malnutrition reported among school children, it is clearly evident that there is a weak link in the chain of public health control which needs special attention if we are to continue to be a vigorous and healthy people.

We should recognize that the prosperity of this, or any well governed nation, depends very largely, if not solely, upon the earning capacity of its people, for the natural resources of the earth yield wealth only when brain and muscle are aptly applied. This earning capacity is not measured entirely by the rate of compensation paid, but by man's ability to obtain, or the inclination to use, those foods best adapted for maintaining health and replenishing energy. In the case of the wage-earner, it has been demonstrated that there is a direct connection between the amount spent for food and the infant mortality rate, while it is a well known fact that our greatest scientists and inventors are noted for stringently adhering to those dietaries which best supply mental and physical vigor. In addition, authentic reports prove that the distribution of suitable lunches or milk in public schools has materially increased

the mental and physical efficiency of the children. The general public eats, as a rule, what appeals to the palate instead of what is best for the body, and the need for greater effort in educating people to correct this evil is very apparent. Dietetics should, therefore, be one of the fundamentals in our educational system. It is interesting to note that in those municipalities which maintain Food Centers the results are evident in the decreased mortality rate.

The above are matters which do not concern the public health alone. Many large business organizations are realizing the relation between a well-balanced food ration and the efficiency of their employees; meals are served them daily, lectures given, and pamphlets distributed, which not only improve their health, but make their working power a valuable asset in business economy. The American Public Health Association should treat this phase of the subject in the light of those broader aspects which affect the physical welfare of the general public.

Although the work of the committee indicates that the mortality rate directly attributable to the eating of tainted food is generally decreasing, frequent deaths from such causes are inexcusable, and there is abundant proof that there is need for more diligence on the part of health officials in watching susceptible food-stuffs during their retail distribution, for that is the time when deterioration from various causes is most easily detected. The elimination of insanitary conditions attending the manufacture of food products and their contact with dirty utensils is also fundamentally necessary from a sanitary standpoint and to prevent spoilage.

Regarding butter, this is a product of vital importance in every home. It is very susceptible to infection, but yet is sold in bulk from insanitary chests, many

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of which, from constant icing, are permeated with wood rot, which contamination is circulated through the food chambers. The protection of this commodity seems just as essential as that of any other prepared food. We recognize the importance of healthy dairymen and milk-producing cattle, yet with few exceptions, creamery products as well as other susceptible foods, are processed and sold by people who, not being subject to medical examination because of inadequate health regulations, are often found to be carriers of communicable diseases. This is especially true during the winter months when colds are prevalent. In endeavoring to ascertain the probable extent to which the transmission of communicable disease is due to the distribution of food, the facts gleaned were significant. As an illustration, in one instance where there were fourteen cases of diphtheria in buildings adjacent to a retail food shop, it was found that the proprietor's daughter, who waited on the children in the sale of candy, was a carrier of the disease, thus establishing a direct connection. It is apparent that medical supervision should be exercised over all persons employed in the sale of susceptible foodstuffs and those serving prepared food in public eating establishments. Many cities have solved this problem by requiring the licensing of all food handlers.

Some study was given to the distribution of food in restaurants and hotels. The great majority of the working people in our cities are served at least one meal a day by a public victualler, and there are great numbers living in small apartments who thus obtain all their meals. Visits have been made to some of the so-called high class hotels and cafés, where fixtures and decorations in the eating rooms were attractive, but where the facilities for handling and keeping food, for sterilizing utensils, disposing of garbage, and other important details were woefully inadequate, with dirt, cockroaches, and other vermin plainly evi-

dent. Incidentally, we found many insanitary conditions in connection with railroad food service. Many state and local boards of health have enacted laws and regulations which provide for the protection of food offered for sale from flies, dust, and personal contact. Should we not go still further and demand the same measure of protection in places where food is prepared or stored?

In previous reports the committee has called attention to the insanitary condition attending the interstate transportation of milk. This is under the jurisdiction of the Interstate Commerce Commission, and although we find a marked improvement, adequate sanitary supervision is most decidedly lacking. Much deterioration and spoilage accrue from inadequate icing in summer and insufficient heating in winter. Such deterioration is of vital importance to the health of the public and more determined efforts should be made to obtain more satisfactory corrections. Regarding the retail distribution of milk we should look forward to a more sanitary form of cap for the lower priced milk. The flat disc caps leave a convenient cavity for the accumulation of dirt and afford no protection for the pouring edge. The practicability of an inexpensive cap, designed to correct this condition, has been referred to the committee for consideration.

In noting some of the graver deficiencies in the marketing of food, it was found that in many of our larger municipalities the so-called market district was the dirtiest part of the entire city. The streets and sidewalks were generally covered with refuse, including discarded, decaying foodstuffs, and in several cases, dead rats and mice were noted. In New England, during the fruit season, great quantities of ripened fruits are daily arriving at the various markets. In many instances we found that they were sorted and culled over on the sidewalk, and that much rotted fruit and deteriorated vegetation were left in the streets which drew flies, mice, and other vermin, with the

consequent danger of spreading disease. Many produce markets are open during the entire twenty-four hours, making it difficult for the street cleaning men to properly clean, or in dry weather to water the streets and sidewalks. Those cities which have overcome these obstacles, by closing the entire market or portions thereof, during certain hours for the purpose of cleaning, promptly removing waste and garbage, and keeping the dust laid are to be commended. Some of the food storage buildings were found to be infested with rats, mice, and waterbugs. Many had no facilities for washing the hands, and where toilets were found they were, as a rule, filthy and not fly proof. The waste of foodstuffs from improper storage and handling at these storage warehouses is enormous, and naturally is charged up to the consumer. It should be obligatory for such buildings to be of rat proof construction, especially those sections used for the storage of susceptible foodstuffs, and more stringent provisions should be adopted for eliminating other forms of contamination.

Specializing in the production of foodstuffs is becoming more prevalent, and undoubtedly results in greater efficiency, but it has become too sectional, geographically, to result in economy to consumers. While soil and climatic conditions make this procedure necessary in some districts, many sections of the country could produce their entire food supply, as in the days of our forefathers, thus effecting a material saving in carrying charges, beside being independently safeguarded should transportation facilities become impaired through strikes or other causes.

Under the auspices of Farm Bureau Units cooperative marketing organizations are effecting economies for producers, and it is suggested that cooperative purchasing organizations among consumers be encouraged as a means of reducing the cost of food. The Home Economics and Extension Service of the Federal and State Governments, Women's

Organizations, and Home Economic Clubs are doing good work in promoting sanitation and conservation in the home and in various phases connected with the distribution and marketing of food, but as they do not have the police power vested in Boards of Health, it is evident that correlation with public health officials is desirable.

The need for more uniform laws for the inspection and control of food in its distribution and marketing is very apparent. The committees from various organizations which have been working for this uniformity have accomplished much good, but this committee believes that the American Public Health Association should take the initiative in carrying this work to completion. If it is protection for the citizens of one state to require that bakery products offered for sale be covered and their manufacture and storage conform to certain sanitary standards, as in Massachusetts, or that butter be sold at retail in cartons only, as in California, the same protection should be afforded throughout the country.

Civilization is undergoing great changes in its commercial, industrial, economic, and governmental structures, which necessitate new methods of procedure and control, and which also bring increased responsibility and greater opportunity for public service. The food supply and relating subjects should consequently be given intensive study, with the view of adopting such constructive policies as will insure greater efficiency in public health administration.

Pertinent suggestions, indicating lines of action, are summarized as follows:

(1) That as a public health measure, every effort should be made to eliminate all forms of waste and extend cooperation to such agencies as are organized in the interest of food economy.

(2) That food economics should be a compulsory rather than an elective study in our public schools, and municipal centers should be established for the education of the general public.

(3) That health authorities should strongly advocate the serving of proper lunches or milk in the public schools.

(4) That handlers of susceptible food-stuffs should be placed under adequate medical supervision.

(5) That the California law prohibiting the sale of butter at retail, except in package form, and the recently enacted Massachusetts bakery law, providing for the sanitary control of bakeshops and their products, be uniformly adopted.

(6) That we use our best influence with the federal officials and others to induce the Interstate Commerce Commission to provide and enforce more adequate and definite rulings for the protection of milk in transit, including the use of refrigerator cars for long hauls.

(7) That local production of food

should be encouraged in the interest of economy.

(8) That more adequate laws be adopted for the sanitary control of markets and food storage warehouses.

(9) That a separate body or food council be organized for the purpose of codifying and promoting uniformity in all food laws not governed by territorial conditions.

(10) That health authorities study the food problem from all angles, that they may be in a position to provide constructive leadership in maintaining an adequate, economical, and safe food supply as a fundamental asset to the health and prosperity of our nation.

WILLARD E. WARD, Chairman,  
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**Parody Sport Book.**—"Health Habits for Good Sports" which meet the approval of the specialist in preventive measures, and which at the same time appeal irresistibly to boys of the difficult age from ten to teens, brings to the problem of health education new and much needed assistance.

A *Parody Sport Book*, by Cliff Goldsmith, "Professor Happy" of the American Child Health Association, tells, in words and pictures which will delight all boys, how to play the game of health from "Water Polo, the Favorite Sport of Bathtub Bay," which "should be played every morning at son rise or daughter rise, as the case may be," to "Evening Baseball, the game that made the White Pajama Twirlers famous over night."

To his convincingly, "Sporty" text, Professor Happy has added equally convincing illustrations by Clive Weed and signed photographs of such sporting world heroes as Charles Paddock, Bobby Jones, and Bo McMillin. But the greatest prize is the full page photograph and personally signed letter from Ty Cobb which introduce the *Sport Book*.

From the point of view of the expert, it is of course equally important that the book be not only attractive to the boys whom it is designed to reach, but also sound in the health principles back of its fun. The fact that it is based on "the rules of the game" as laid down by the *American Child Health Associa-*

*tion* assure the thorough good sense of its teaching.

The *Parody Sport Book* is published by the Health Education Division of the *American Child Health Association*, and may be had from the Association's New York office, 370 Seventh Avenue, or through Brentano's, New York.



Sir Thomas Oliver, the distinguished British occupational disease expert, will visit this country during October. Sir Thomas contemplates a rather extended trip, as far west as Chicago and as far south as New Orleans, chiefly for the purpose of visiting representative industrial establishments, suggestive of the progress which has been made in industrial hygiene and employees' welfare work since 1912, when he made a similar tour of inspection, limited, however, to a more restricted area. His visit will include oil refineries, felt hat making, potteries, printing, electrotyping, asbestos, tobacco, cotton, iron and steel, sugar, white lead, limestone, cement, motor cars, rubber, paper, wool, and possibly anthracite coal and slate. The itinerary of the trip is in charge of Dr. Frederick L. Hoffman, Consulting Statistician of the Prudential Insurance Company of America. Sir Thomas will address the members of the Association at the Boston meeting.